



World Economic Forum Brings Together Business from Across Africa for Groundbreaking AIDS Meeting

18 July 2003 - Livingstone, Zambia

Fifteen African anti-AIDS business coalitions from across Africa were brought together for the first time to advance the private sector's role in fighting AIDS in the workplace. Meeting in Zambia, the coalitions have outlined shared strategies and pooled best practice in the battle against AIDS and its wider effects on the community. The gathering was also an opportunity for the first meeting between National AIDS Councils from the 15 countries in an attempt to build a public private partnership in the region. According to UNAIDS, these 15 countries have approximately 20 million, or 47%, of the 42 million people living with AIDS worldwide.

Representing countries with HIV rates ranging from between 5-40% of their adult population, national anti-AIDS business coalitions in each of the countries were formed over the past few years with the objective of gathering and sharing corporate best practice, conducting business-to-business advocacy and awareness campaigns, mobilizing the private sector in the fight against AIDS and working with local partners such as national ministries of health, and national and international NGOs.

Brought together by the World Economic Forum's [Global Health Initiative](#) (GHI), the World Bank and UNAIDS, representatives from the business anti-AIDS coalitions of 15* countries came together at the week-long meeting in Zambia to share their experiences.

"This meeting is the first time national business coalitions have met each other. Until now, each of the coalitions has been facing the challenges of AIDS impacting on workers and communities at the national level. If we are to fight AIDS effectively, the efforts of government and NGOs are not enough in themselves; we also need private sector skills in marketing and project management, and their focus on results and ability to reach into communities to help in the fight," said Kate Taylor, Director of the Global Health Initiative at the World Economic Forum.

The business coalitions were able to share their experiences and know-how with national and multinational companies, labour and employer groups, and bilateral and multilateral donors.

"The dawn for the systematic and coherent marshalling of private sector engagement is upon us. Business coalitions are a centrepiece in the mobilization, strategizing and directing of efforts against HIV/AIDS," said Doctor Dickson Opol, Executive Director of the Uganda Business Coalition Against HIV-AIDS. "The Livingstone meeting is an historic opportunity to turn the tide and define the role of the private sector."

Efforts to organize the private sector response are critical to the

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fight against HIV/AIDS. Countries battling AIDS need to ensure their economies not only function but also grow, so that they have sufficient resources for their efforts.

“This meeting marks the beginning of a co-ordinated effort between the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the UNAIDS, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other donor agencies to ensure that we harness the core competencies of the private sector in the battle against HIV/AIDS,” said Elizabeth Ashbourne from the World Bank. “The Multi-Country AIDS Programme, the World Bank’s mechanism to fund a global multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS, is committed to forging innovative partnerships between national AIDS Councils and the private sector to fight the epidemic.”

“A big step has been made. A giant is awakening destined to make enormous difference to the fight against HIV/AIDS and to protect African economies threatened with collapse,” added Roy Hauya, Deputy Director, National AIDS Commission, Malawi.”

*The 15 countries are Botswana, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

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